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AUTHOR	Janney, Rachel; Hedeen, Deborah
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ABSTRACT

This inservice training module was designed as part of the Child-Centered Inservice Training Project (Syracuse, New York) for use with paraprofessionals in educational programs for children with developmental disabilities. Use of the materials is recommended to encourage team problem solving, to practice new skills, and to provide ongoing support mechanisms to encourage continuing use of new skills. The module describes the basic ideas behind positive approaches to challenging behaviors and describes an educative process for developing individualized programs to address students' behavior problems. A six-step problem solving process is described, including: (1) identify the behavior problem; (2) gather information about when the behavior does/does not occur; (3) develop an idea about the purpose of the behavior; (4) make a plan that includes prevention, teaching, and reacting to the behavior; (5) use the plan and keep records on behavior frequency; (6) evaluate the plan and adjust if needed. Appended are sample data collection forms. Contains six references. (DB)

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A Problem-Solving Approach to Challenging Behaviors:

A Training Module for Paraprofessionals in School Programs for Students with Developmental Disabilities

Rachel Janney and Deborah Hedeen
Child-Centered Inservice Training and Technical Assistance Network
Syracuse University
Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation

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INTRODUCTION

This module was designed for use with paraprofessionals (Educational Assistants, Teacher Aides) in educational programs for children who have developmental disabilities. The module could be used as a guide for developing a workshop for a group of paraprofessionals, or as a resource packet for paraprofessionals to read on their own. Our experience has been that effective inservice training incorporates practice in team problem-solving, opportunities to practice new skills, and mechanisms to support the ongoing use of those skills. This requires that teachers and program administrators be actively involved in training for paraprofessionals.

The module describes some of the basic ideas behind positive approaches to challenging behaviors and describes an educative process for developing individualized programs to address students' behavior problems at home, school, or in the community.

OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Describe behavior in observable, measurable terms.

2. Explain what is meant by "communicative intent" of challenging behavior.

3. Identify three levels of seriousness of behavior problems.

4. Identify and utilize several data collection strategies for assessing behavior:

   a. An Incident Record including an objective summary of observable behavior (the student's and the adult's) and subjective hypotheses about why the behavior occurred and how it might have been prevented.

   b. A time sampling procedure for recording the frequency of an excess behavior.

   c. A Daily Log including observations about any important incidents and a record of successful and unsuccessful tasks and activities.

5. Identify three possible functions of behavior (including three different types of social/communicative behavior) and give examples of each.

7. Describe how information regarding the function of a behavior is used to design an intervention.

8. Explain the difference between an intervention and a crisis management plan.

A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

This inservice training module is about interventions for behavior problems displayed by persons with developmental disabilities. Many different words have been used to describe problem behaviors, including "inappropriate," "aberrant," "bizarre," and "maladaptive." The terms we prefer to use are "excess behavior," "challenging behavior," and "problem behavior," which highlight the idea that the behaviors are a problem, not the person.

Though some approaches to behavior problems emphasize choosing the most efficient and/or effective methods for decreasing the behavior of concern, the approach to behavior problems described here is different. We believe that a positive approach to solve behavior problems must show all of the following characteristics:

1. Effective and educational. Punishments such as time-out in a secluded room, corporal punishment, or taking away privileges can decrease certain problem behaviors, but often this result will be only temporary. The treatment may only work as long as you continue to punish or threaten to punish the person (and sometimes even increase the "dosage"). This happens because punishment only controls behavior, it doesn't change it. We have found that a problem behavior may be the only strategy a child has to tell you what he wants or needs. Therefore, to change such a problem behavior, the child has to learn what to do instead. We believe that if we really want to help children, we need to help them to learn new ways of expressing themselves and getting their needs met.

2. Humane and normalized. A strategy that is humane and normalized could be used in public, with anyone. People with disabilities should be treated like we ourselves expect to be treated, with opportunities to live, work, and play with non-disabled people. We can't segregate them from the rest of the world until their problems "go away." And when we do interact with people with behavior problems in school and in the community, we must insure that our teaching interactions contribute to the dignity of the persons we work with.

3. Preventative. It's usually more productive to prevent problems, instead of only thinking about how to react when the problem occurs. One reason for this is that preventing problems saves wear and tear on everyone involved. Another reason is that the more practice a person has doing things one way, the harder it is to teach them another way. (It's like learning to type with ten fingers when you're used to using two; the more practice you have with two fingers, the harder it is to learn to use ten.)

We can usually predict the kinds of situations that will lead to problems, so the first step is to prevent things from getting out of hand.

4. Individualized. This approach emphasizes decision-making and problem-solving done on an individualized basis for each child. There is not one method that will work for every child in every situation. What you do depends on the person, the skills and behaviors he or she has, and the purpose of the problem behavior.

The Purpose Of Challenging Behaviors

One of the major ideas behind an educative approach is that nearly all behavior--including problem behavior--has a purpose. Behaviors such as tantrums, aggression, and self-injurious behaviors may be disturbing to us, and we would certainly want to help someone stop doing these behaviors. But people who do these things are not necessarily "disturbed." These behaviors often tell us that the person does not have a better way to say or do something that he or she is really motivated to say or do. Furthermore, the behavior must be "working" in some way, or the person would probably stop using it.

The Idea of Communicative Intent

Many times, a problem behavior is a form of non-verbal communication. Another way to say this is that the behavior has communicative intent. Think about all the things we need to be able to communicate to others:

"I want"
"I don't want"
"Yes," "No"
"I'm tired/hot/cold/bored/frustrated/lonely"
"I need help"
"I want attention"
"I like you"
"Leave me alone"
"I don't understand"

It's important to recognize that we all have difficulty communicating some of these things in positive ways. We may sometimes give someone the "silent treatment" or even have a "tantrum" when we don't get our way or don't get enough attention. Imagine a child with a disability who has few skills and knows only a few words or signs (or hasn't yet learned to talk or sign at all!). This child has difficulty expressing thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs, and few ways of controlling his or her world. It is easy to understand how such a child might not always use "positive" or "appropriate" ways to communicate.

The following profiles describe young people we have known. Their challenging behaviors may help illustrate these points.

JIM

Jim is labeled severely mentally retarded. He loves people, but he does not talk and uses only a few signs and gestures to communicate. The most effective way he's found to say "Pay attention to me" is by grabbing or even pinching people. Jim has learned that sitting nicely and smiling sometimes works as a way to get attention, but pinching always works. If attention is what he wants most, it "makes sense" to him to use pinching to get it.

BOBBY

Bobby is a 5-year old boy who is labeled autistic. He doesn't talk, weighs about 130 pounds, and sometimes lies down on the floor at school and refuses to get up. When his teacher looked more closely at the behavior, she found that this happened when Bobby was asked to do things like a stacking cone or a peg board (which he already knows how to do and had been doing for years) while sitting in a chair that fit an average-sized kindergarten child. From Bobby's point of view, the most effective way to get out of that situation was to lie on the floor.

SUSAN

Susan, a teenage girl labeled autistic, digs at her skin until she bleeds. On closer examination, it seemed that she did this when her parents or teachers made certain choices for her or tried to help her too much, such as when she was made to eat even though she didn't want to, or told when to go to the bathroom. When means of normal control were taken away from her, she started scratching herself and then scratching others when they tried to stop her. This was her way of controlling them and saying "Let me do it myself."

Obviously, these behaviors are difficult for educators and parents to cope with. Our goal is to teach these children other ways of expressing themselves. The forms that Susan, Bob, and Jim used to communicate were not conventional, but they were effective. Furthermore, there is probably nothing very inappropriate about what they were communicating--it is boring doing a stacking cone every day when you already know how, it is acceptable to want to interact with other people, and it is reasonable to want to use the bathroom when

you need to instead of when someone tells you to. Instead of just trying to eliminate problem behaviors, we need to figure out what these children are telling us and then teach them other ways to communicate.

THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS

In your position as a paraprofessional, you will not be responsible for designing an intervention. However, as an individual who knows the students well, your input into both the planning and implementation of an intervention are invaluable. We will describe here all of the steps of the problem-solving process, because we believe that paraprofessionals who know a student well should be included as a member of the team of people designing and implementing an intervention plan. However, the activities provided are designed to give practice in only those steps in which you will be most actively involved.

Six Step Problem-Solving Process

1. Ask, "What is the problem?" If there are several problems, decide which is most important and where to start.

2. Gather information about when the behavior does/does not occur.

3. Develop an idea about the purpose of the behavior.

4. Make a plan that includes ways of:
   a. Preventing: Make a list of persons, places, things, activities, and so on that can be avoided or changed in some way (either temporarily or permanently.)

   b. Teaching: Decide on a better way the person can achieve the same purpose.

   c. Reacting: Decide what to do when the problem occurs.

5. Use the plan and keep records on what happens to the behavior.

6. After a few weeks, ask "How is it going?" Make adjustments if needed.

Step 1: What is the Problem?

The first thing that needs to be done is to clearly identify the problem behavior so that an objective observer could tell when the behavior of concern is occurring. For example, instead of "He won't do anything I tell him to," describe exactly what he does when told to do something. Does he throw the dishes when you hand them to him and ask him to set the table? Does he sit down on the floor and refuse to move when it's time to go to P.E.? Similarly, instead of "She gets upset all the time," describe what she does when she is upset. Does she cry, scream, and hide under the table? Or does she run after you and hit you?

Many children with severe disabilities have several problem behaviors. We can't and shouldn't try to deal with all of them at once. To decide where to start, it is helpful to think of three levels of seriousness of problem behaviors.

Level I Behaviors. These are behaviors that are health or life threatening to the child. Behaviors such as head-banging, biting one's self, vomiting, and eating inedible substances would be included in this category. These behaviors are the highest priority, and efforts should always be made to eliminate them and replace them with new skills.

Level II Behaviors. The next level of seriousness of challenging behaviors includes those that are serious enough to warrant formal consideration because they represent one of four "risk" categories:

1. The behavior is dangerous to other people (for example, hitting or scratching others);

2. The behavior interferes with learning (for example, crying or running away when you are trying to teach the student how to do something);

3. The behavior is likely to become more serious in the near future (for example, head hitting that does not result in tissue damage, picking at skin);

4. The behavior is of great concern to caregivers (for example, tantrums in public places, so that the family seldom takes the child out in public).

In general, these kinds of behaviors are not as high a priority as Level I behaviors, and should only be modified if the potential benefits to the student outweigh the costs (For example, if efforts to decrease a student's light face slapping result in head-banging, it might be better not to intervene with the light face slapping at this time). In general, Level II behaviors should be addressed through goals to teach the child alternative skills.

Level III Behaviors. The third and least serious level of problem behaviors includes those behaviors that could be described as "normal deviance." These are behaviors that:

1. interfere with acceptance in the community (for example, echolalia or hand-flapping in public places);

2. damage objects (for example, tearing books and papers);
3. are not getting better or have been a problem for a long time (for example, a 12-year old who still sucks her thumb).

Level III behaviors are generally not serious enough to develop a specific intervention plan for until all the child's other needs have been met.

Step 2: Gather Information

This step is often called an "A-B-C (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequences) Analysis" or "Functional Analysis." It involves gathering information about the people, places, things, or activities that may be related to the problem behavior. If you can discover the antecedents that seem to set the stage for or happen right before the behavior, you can change those things (at least temporarily while the child is learning new skills), and sometimes prevent problems from happening. Information about the consequences that tends to follow the behavior may help you to discover the purpose for which the child is using the behavior.

To conduct a functional analysis, the team needs to gather the following kinds of information:

A. What are the antecedents which predict that the behavior will occur or not occur? In other words,

Who is present when the problem behavior occurs? How many people? Who is about to come in or about to leave? Are there adults, children, teachers, parents, or strangers present? Does the behavior not occur when Mrs. "A" is there?

What is going on when the problem behavior occurs? Is the child being asked to do something? Is it free play time? Is the child being asked to do something easy or hard? What are the other people present doing? Is it almost time to start a different activity? Is the person having to wait for help, attention or a turn? Is it math, reading, gym, or music time? What is going on when the behavior does not occur?

When does the problem occur? When does the problem almost never occur? Every morning? Late at night? Only on Monday morning? On Friday afternoon? Before lunch? Just before the bus arrives?

Where does the problem occur? On the playground? In the classroom? Is the child in a small space or a large open space? Does it occur at home? In the grocery store? At the movies? On the bus?

B. What is the behavior like? What form does the behavior take? How often does it occur? How long does it last? How intense is it?

C. What consequences tend to occur following the behavior? Consider not only the consequences purposefully applied by staff, but anything that occurs following the behavior. Do people leave the room or gather around? Does the student get whatever he or she wanted, including something previously refused? Do demands for participating in activities or tasks stop? Is there a lot of excitement?

A Scatter Plot, a Daily Log, and an Incident Record are data collection strategies can be helpful in gathering this information. These strategies are designed to record information which the team can use to develop hypotheses about what might be motivating the behavior. They can also be used to keep a record of what happens to the behavior over time.

A Scatter Plot is a technique for measuring how often specific behaviors occur at different times of day. A staff person designated as an "observer" or the staff person who is working with the student records each time the behavior occurs within each time period. These intervals are usually 10 to 30 minutes long. The Appendix provides an example of a Scatter Plot data collection form used to record incidents of screaming. Note that the behavior occurred most frequently from 10:45 to 11:30 and between 1:30 and 2:15. After collecting this data, staff realized that Cindy's screaming coincided with the unstructured leisure activities scheduled during those times of day.

Daily Logs should be filled out by a designated staff person on a regular basis (usually three days per week), regardless of whether the problem behavior occurred on that day. You should record your overall impressions of the kind of day the student had, any incidents that seemed important to you, and your observations about tasks and activities which the student liked or didn't like. The Appendix includes both positive and negative examples of completed Daily Logs. Notice that the negative example provides little information which would be useful for problem-solving.

Incident Records should be completed whenever there is a major incident or when a crisis management procedure is used. The Incident Record should be completed by the staff person most directly involved in the incident. To be helpful in problem-solving, an Incident Record should contain objective information about what happened before, during, and after the incident and also the staff person's subjective thoughts and feelings about why it happened or how it could have been prevented. Positive and negative examples of completed Incident Records are provided in the Appendix. Note that the positive example both documents the incident more completely and shows that the staff person who completed it was trying to interpret the problem behavior from the student's perspective.

Step 3: Develop a Theory

We can't help people with their problems unless we understand what they're trying to do or tell us. Sometimes, people can tell us what they want. If they can, we should listen. If they can't, we need to be observant; their behavior often speaks for them. This step in the problem-solving process requires us to be observant and to consider the world from the child's perspective. If we want to teach people more positive ways of affecting the world, we need to know what they are already trying to say or do. This is similar to asking "Why does the behavior occur?" except that we are not trying to figure out why the person started doing the behavior, we're trying to figure out why they keep on using the behavior. In other words, you are trying to determine what the purpose, or motivation for the specific behavior might be.

There are at least three possible purposes of problem behavior:

1. Communication. As we said earlier, the purpose of much problem behavior is social or communicative. There are three different social/communicative purposes that the child might be trying to achieve:

   a. The need for attention or interaction. The behavior is a way to get attention; it serves the purpose of saying "Hello," or "Play with me," or "Am I o.k.?"

   b. Escaping or avoiding a person, task or situation. The person is trying to say "Stop," "No," "I don't like this," "I need a break," or "This is too hard/easy/boring."

   c. Getting something you want is another function of social-communicative behavior. If a person doesn't have a conventional way of saying "I want," or "Give me," he or she may use another behavior, such as a tantrum, which has worked in the past.

2. Self-regulatory. Not all problem behaviors have social or communicative purposes. This is often true of behaviors such as hand flapping, fingertapping, or spinning objects (the sorts of behaviors often described as "self-stimulatory" or "stereotypic" behaviors). The child may need to do these things to regulate his or her energy level. Some children do these things when there is too much going on around them, and others when there is not enough going on. So-called self-stimulatory behaviors do not always prevent the child from focusing or learning. Some may actually help a child to focus, and be no more distracting than leg-swinging, pencil-chewing or nail biting for you or me.

3. Play. The purpose of some excess behavior is play. The child just likes doing it, especially if there is nothing else to do.

In some cases, it's relatively easy to determine the purpose of problem behavior. In other cases, it's not as easy, especially if the child uses the same behavior for more than one purpose or several behaviors for the same purpose. For example, a child may grab people in order to say "I want to play" and also to say "I am frustrated." Another child may express anger or frustration in several different ways, such as through tantrums, self-injury, and by hitting other people.

In such cases, the team should gather information for a week or so, and then meet to discuss your hypothesis about the purpose or purposes of the behavior. If you can't reach agreement on this step, you will need to gather information that will help you "test" which hypothesis is best. For example, if the team is not sure whether the purpose of the student's hitting is to escape from difficult tasks or to get attention, you could observe and compare the student's behavior under various circumstances. Does the student only exhibit the behavior when he's faced with a difficult task, or does he act the same way if he's doing an easy task yet not receiving much attention? Being observant about the relationships between things in the environment (i.e. the antecedents and consequences) and the behavior will help you to determine the purpose or function of the challenging behavior.

Step 4: Make a Plan

An intervention plan for serious challenging behavior will usually need to include three general kinds of strategies: strategies for preventing problems, strategies for teaching new skills, and strategies for reacting when the behavior does occur. In addition, if the child ever does very serious behaviors that are destructive to the child or to others, a crisis management plan should be developed.

Preventing. As discussed above, asking "who, what, when and where" can give us information to use in making changes that can help prevent problems. Sometimes, there is some problem with the environment that is setting the stage for the problem behavior and should be changed permanently. For example, if a student reacts negatively to constant physical prompting, a lack of predictability and routine, or people who treat him or her roughly, it is the environment that should change. Furthermore, we all make choices about things we like to do. Some of us avoid large crowds, busy supermarkets, camping trips, or in-laws; this is "normal" behavior, and these choices should be acceptable for people with disabilities as often as they would be to anyone else.

Other factors in the environment can be changed temporarily, as a way to prevent the problem until the person has more skills for coping with whatever is difficult for them. This is similar to the idea of keeping high calorie snacks (ice cream, for example) out of your refrigerator at home when you first start on a diet to reduce the temptation to overeat. Later on, as you are into the habit of eating more carefully, you might feel more comfortable with ice cream around.

Here are some examples of preventing:

(1) Larry often cried, screamed, and refused to move when he had to be in the halls between class periods at school. His teacher rearranged his schedule so that he didn't have to be in the halls at those times, and then let him gradually get used to the halls when things were quieter. After awhile, he knew the school better, felt safer there, and no longer had these difficulties.

(2) Larry would also throw and tear materials at school. Classroom staff noticed that Larry mostly threw things such as pegs and pegboards, blocks that he was supposed to sort by color, and nuts and bolts used in "prevocational training." When Larry's teacher gave him more functional activities to work on such as fixing a snack, setting the table, going grocery shopping, and running errands, Larry no longer threw and tore things. It seems that these activities made sense to Larry in a way that pegboards and sorting did not.

(3) The mother of another young man noticed that he had developed a fear of trash cans and would scream whenever he saw one. She started keeping them under tables or put lids on them. She never really knew why this worked, but it did!

(4) A teacher noticed that Don often had tantrums when a particular staff person was assigned to work with him. She scheduled that staff person to work with other students until she could train the staff person to work with Don in a more positive way and help Don and the staff person get to know each other better.

(5) Kathy would bite her hand whenever she was corrected for making a mistake, such as if she was folding towels and was told she did not have the edges even. When her parents helped her by pointing or helping her so that she did things right the first time, she stopped biting herself.

(6) David's problem behavior was banging his head on hard surfaces. When he seemed to be upset or anxious, staff would keep him away from closed areas, try to distract him by having him pick up something and carry it to another room, or go for a short walk to try to change his mood.

(7) Beth often had a difficult time getting ready for school in the morning. She got up too early and woke everyone else up, refused to make her bed, and spent so much time getting dressed that she did not have time for breakfast. Beth's mother made her a chart with pictures of the things Beth needed to do to get ready for school. Using the chart helped Beth to stay better organized in the morning. (Beth's mother also had a plan for reacting: If Beth completed all the steps on the chart, she got a quarter for ice-cream at school that day. If she didn't, her mother talked to her about how she could try to do better the next day.)

Teaching. The answer to the question "Why?" gives us a theory about the purpose of the problem behavior. The most important part of your 3-part plan involves teaching the person a new way or ways to achieve this same purpose. If the purpose of the problem behavior is communicating something, then the person must be taught a new form for communicating the same thing. For example, if a child indicates "I want something to drink" by screaming, he or she could learn to use a word, sign, or gesture to say "drink." If the behavior's purpose is self-regulation or play, the person needs to learn a new way to do those things. For example, one alternative to covering your ears with your hand and screaming to block out loud noises that upset you would be learning to use a radio or tape player with headphones. Instead of dropping objects on the floor for play, a child could learn to play Connect Four.

Here are additional examples of teaching:

(1) Tom learned to sign "Break" instead of sitting on the floor when tired of working.

(2) Bill learned to "Give five" instead of grabbing people and pinching them when he wanted attention.

(3) Kathy learned to ask for help instead of biting her hands when frustrated by a difficult task.

(4) Larry learned to sign "Help" instead of crying and tugging on people when he wanted to get something that was out of reach.

Children with behavior problems seldom have just one specific behavior problem that can be replaced with one specific adaptive skill. They often have general deficits in social skills, self-management skills, and strategies for coping with frustration or anxiety. Besides teaching specific adaptive skills such as those described above, intervention plans for most children will need to include curricular interventions to teach these kinds of general skills.

For example, if a student throws materials when he is frustrated, we would first want to teach that student a specific adaptive alternative, such as verbally communicating that he needs help with a difficult task. However, the underlying problem is that this student has a very low tolerance for frustration, so we would also need to address the long term curricular goal by teaching him to deal with and reduce frustration. We might do this by playing games with the student that he could not always win, doing more teasing and joking with him, and putting him in other mildly frustrating situations while providing him the support to handle those situations. Teaching these kinds of skills can be a long term process, but it is necessary if we want to provide students with the ability to manage themselves in a variety of environments.

Reacting. Unfortunately, some people who work with children who have disabilities and challenging behaviors are only concerned about how to react when problems occur. Reacting is usually referred to as "consequences," and is usually done in the form of rewards or punishments. We think the purpose of reacting is to show the child that the problem behavior doesn't "work" as a way to get what he or she wants. At the same time, we want to show the child that we will listen and help him or her to use another behavior that will work.

Here are some pointers on how to react to problem behavior. Please remember that we are not suggesting that you use any of these strategies across-the-board. The decision about which strategies to use must be made on an individualized basis.

(1) Ignore and redirect. Ignoring problem behavior should almost always be followed by redirecting, or showing the child what to do instead. Ignoring does not mean ignoring the child and allowing the behavior to continue. It does mean not talking about the behavior and not letting the behavior work as a way to accomplish some purpose. If a child screams to get attention, and you give the child lots of attention by talking to him or her, standing close, and getting upset, then you are teaching the child that screaming is an effective way to get your attention. On the other hand, ignoring the child completely often makes the child think, "They didn't notice. I'll have to keep trying." So the child finds some behavior that can't be ignored, and ends up getting attention for using a worse behavior than the one he or she started with. Then the child learns that making a little noise doesn't work as a way to get attention, but having a tantrum does.

The key to ignoring is to pair it with "redirecting," or directing the child's attention back to the task through gestures, manipulating the materials, or physically prompting the child to make contact with the materials. Then, when the child makes even the slightest move toward participation, you should reward him or her with physical and/or verbal contact.

Obviously, behavior that is dangerous or harmful should not just be ignored and allowed to continue; the child and others should be protected.

(2) Rewards. We advocate making your presence and the child's activities rewarding. If you can't seem to find any activities that the child likes, this is often a sign that he or she needs to learn how to enjoy participating in activities with other people.

Any material rewards should be normalized, and rewards should be logically related to the behavior if possible. For example, a logical reward for doing work (school work or chores at home) is having free time when it's done. One danger of relying too much on artificial rewards is that the person may do or not do certain things just to get the reward. Another is that the person will only do the behavior when you're around to deliver the reward, and will not learn to control his or her own behavior.

Another thing to remember about rewards is this: If the child does the positive behavior, then he or she gets the reward, not the other way around. For example, if you want a student to pick up his toys, don't say "If I let you listen to music for a few minutes, will you pick up your toys?" Instead, say, "If you pick up your toys, then you can listen to music."

(3) Logical consequences. There are a few negative consequences that can fit with this approach, but they must be used within an individualized, problem-solving approach and are not recommended across-the-board. Gentle, logical consequences need to be used with the child's abilities in mind, and teaching must also be taking place so that the child learns what to do instead next time.

Taking away privileges or things is one such logical consequence. For example, suppose a child hits another student while they are playing a game on the playground. A logical consequence would be simply not allowing the child to take his or her next turn. This can be just as effective (if not more so) than taking away his or her playground privileges for a week. Taking away privileges or things should be done right after the problem has occurred, and should involve something that is logically and directly related to the problem behavior. For example, if the child throws a toy across the room, the toy could be taken away for a short period of time. Taking away the child's dessert at lunch time an hour later will not make sense to the child and is not likely to be effective.

Verbal reprimands are another consequence that can work with some students and in some situations. We all tend to scold and nag others when they do things we don't like. Occasionally, this can be effective, but sometimes we have no effect or even the opposite effect of what we intended. Scolding can backfire when children learn that negative behavior is a more certain way to get attention than positive behavior. Other children crave attention so much that any attention is a reward to them whether we think of it as positive or negative.

If a child understands words and rules and is "just testing" to see if he or she can get away with something, it can make sense to remind him or her of the rule that has been broken. For example, if a child knows that bouncing the basketball off the ceiling is not allowed and is doing it just to see if he or she can get away with it, it makes sense to say "The ball is for bouncing on the floor, not on the ceiling." However, if the child doesn't talk, doesn't understand words or rules, and was throwing the ball to get your attention, then running over and talking about the behavior teaches the child that bouncing the ball on the ceiling is the way to say "Come here and play with me." In that case, a better way to react might be to take the ball and show the child what to do with it, such as by starting a game of rolling the ball back and forth. Then, as soon as the child starts to play "the right way," say something positive like "Good for you!"

Another logical consequence might be called "restitution." An example of this would be having a child pick up the food he or she has thrown or putting back something that was taken from a classmate. One thing to watch out for in reacting in this way is if the child refuses to make the restitution and a tug-of-war results. Sometimes, you need to wait until the child is calm before requiring the restitution, so that you don't get into a physical or emotional struggle and lose sight of the original goal. Restitution can also fail when the purpose of the child's problem behavior is escape or avoidance. If a child throws the materials during a lesson he dislikes and you stop to have him pick up the materials, you have allowed throwing to work as a way to escape. Instead, you should try to prevent further throwing by controlling the materials, and then continue the lesson.

(4) Cooling off. This means simply having the child take a break, such as by going for a short walk, running an errand, or sitting in a quiet part of the classroom. (This way of reacting is similar to the idea of time-out, but we are not calling it that because there are so many different kinds of time-out, most of them meant as punishment.) The purpose of this strategy is to help the child calm down before he or she loses control so it needs to be used when the first signs of a problem occur. It can be used as a way to help the child learn to control himself or herself. It is similar to the idea of going for a

walk when you need to "cool off," and it can work for children the same way it does for adults.

Time-out, on the other hand--especially seclusionary time- out, where the child is actually taken out of the classroom as a consequence for his or her behavior--has several shortcomings. Besides eliminating all opportunities for learning while the child is in time-out, it does not teach the child what to do instead of the problem behavior. Further, the child gets out of time-out for being quiet in time-out; How does this help the child continue to behave appropriately in the place where he or she originally had the problem? Another problem with time-out is that it cannot be used in community settings.

We feel that putting a child in a time-out box or booth is never an appropriate procedure. Even time-out somewhere else in the same room should be avoided if it's a physical struggle to get there, as this both defeats the purpose of time-out by giving the child lots of attention and presents a very negative image of the child to anyone who witnesses the struggle.

Crisis management. If a child sometimes hurts himself or herself or other people, or damages property in a dangerous way, a crisis management plan may need to be developed. The idea of crisis management is to protect the child and others; the crisis management procedure should not be used as a consequence for behavior. It is important to understand that crisis management is a way to deal with an emergency situation, it is not an intervention for changing behavior. A crisis management plan should address who will intervene, and what they can do to protect the student and others without contributing to the episode. And staff must be trained in how to do the procedure as well as how to complete an incident record whenever it is used.

When we speak of "crisis management," many people automatically think of physical restraint. There are many reasons to be cautious about the use of physical restraint. For one thing, it is very easy for adults to get emotionally involved when a child is having a hard time; they feel angry, threatened, and out of control. Using physical restraint at such a time requires the adult to be highly skilled in controlling his or her own emotions and behavior. How many of us can truly remain calm and collected when engaged in a physical struggle with a child?

Another reason to be cautious about the use of physical restraint is that a person can actually become dependent on restraint. It's as if he or she wants to stop doing the behavior, but doesn't know how. We believe that we have not done our job if we make a person dependent on physical restraint rather than helping him or her learn other ways to act.

Personal restraint -- holding someone until he or she is calm -- should be viewed as something that may have to be done in an emergency situation to protect a child from hurting himself or herself or others. It should not be used as a consequence for the problem behavior, nor should the person have to display certain behaviors or say certain things in order to be "turned loose."

Step Five: Use the Plan

This is the point at which the team's thought and planning result in action. Before proceeding, be sure you have all the materials you need (for example, new games, or pictures for a communication booklet). Schedule team members' time carefully so that each person knows what his or her responsibilities are. Also make sure that everyone feels comfortable in his or her ability to use the strategies you have planned. If you don't, try observing and giving feedback to one another, or even role-playing a challenging situation. Videotapes can also be helpful in assessing your own behavior.

Step Six: How is it Going?

After a few weeks of using an intervention plan, the team should ask, "How is it going?" If it's going well, you can soon begin "undoing" some of the temporary preventing strategies. If it's not going well, your hypothesis about the purpose of the behavior may be wrong, the environment may not have been changed enough to prevent the behavior, and/or the student may not be learning to use new skills effectively. You may need to make some adjustments in your plan or talk to some other people to see if they have ideas you haven't thought of. Remember, too, that old habits die hard; if the student is a teenager or young adult, he or she may have had this problem behavior for a long time and the people around him or her may be stuck in a pattern of reacting that is difficult to change. Real changes often take time.

Suggestions for Making a Plan

1. Build on your team's strengths, don't emphasize your weaknesses. For example, if you know that you are not likely to be consistent in reacting by delivering a certain reward or negative consequence, focus on preventing.

2. Target a particular time or day or a daily routine and change one thing at a time. A situation where there is a high incidence of problem behavior is often a good place to start.

3. Just as you are not going to try to change all of the child's problems at once, adults should not expect themselves to change all at once. Each member of the team should pick one or two personal objectives to focus on, such as "I will decrease the number of times I verbally correct Bill and increase the number of times I reward him with praise or a pat on the back."

4. Make sure that your plan is suitable for the student's actual age. If the student is 12 years old and doesn't know how to play except by dropping and twirling objects, teach him or her to use a tape player, to look at magazines, or to play a simple card game; don't teach him or her to play with young children's toys.

5. When it comes to making decisions about where to give the student choices, think about his or her actual age. If a 20-year old young man who has a disability refuses to wear a sweater to his job site even though you think he should, ask yourself what you would do if he did not have a disability. If no actual harm would come from the student's choice, maybe you shouldn't worry about it. People can't learn to be responsible for their choices and decisions if they don't have a chance to try.

6. Where there is a conflict between you and the student over what he or she will do or not do, think in terms of compromise rather than winning or losing.

And above all, remember that even though a student has a behavior problem, the major purpose of the school program is to provide him or her with an education. Whatever we do to and for that student must be consistent with his or her right to learn new skills and be treated with dignity and respect.

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APPENDIX

Sample Data Collection Forms

Use for: ____ Time sampling (Check box if behavior occurred within that interval)

✓ Frequency count (Tally each time behavior occurs within interval)

Student: CINDY Dates: OCTOBER 5-9, 1980

Behavior: SCREAMING

	Monday Date: 10/5	Tuesday Date: 10/6	Wednesday Date: 10/7	Thursday Date: 10/8	Friday Date: 10/9
8:30					
8:45					
9:00	1			1	
9:15					1
9:30	11	1	1		
9:45				11	1
10:00	1		1		
10:15		1			
10:30					
10:45	11	11	11	1	11
11:00	11	111	11	111	11
11:15	11	111	111	11	111
11:30	1111	11	~~1111~~	1111	~~1111~~
11:45					
12:00					
12:15					
12:30					1
12:45				1	
1:00		1			
1:15					
1:30					
1:45	11	1	111	11	11
2:00	111	11	11	1111	111
2:15					
2:30					
2:45			1		1
3:00					

• POSITIVE EXAMPLE •

DAILY LOG

Student Name MARY Day of Week/Date MON., 11·5·88

Log Entry By CAROL

1. Overall, what kind of day did the student have?

1	2	3	(4)	5	(circle one number only)
Very Good Day	Okay	Not Sure	Not Okay	Very Bad Day	

2. How well did the student do on tasks while in school today?

1	2	3	(4)	5	(circle one number only)
Very Good Day	Okay	Not Sure	Not Okay	Very Bad Day	

3. How well did the student do on tasks in the community today?

1	(2)	3	4	5	(circle one number only)
Very Good Day	Okay	Not Sure	Not Okay	Very Bad Day	

o Comment briefly on the day's events and the student's behavior; note any incidents which occurred that seem important to you.

MARY SEEMED UNINTERESTED IN MOST OF THE ACTIVITIES TODAY. SHE WANTED TO DO ACTIVITIES ALONE TODAY. WHEN WE WENT TO THE LIBRARY TOGETHER, SHE SAW A CHILD WATCHING A MOVIE AND WALKED DIRECTLY TO THE AREA AND SAT DOWN NEXT TO THE CHILD. I GAVE HER HEADPHONES AND SHE SAT AND WATCHED THE MOVIE. MARY HAD NEVER SHOWN SUCH AN INTEREST IN AN ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM.

o Tasks/Activities the student enjoyed or worked well on.

- WATCHING A MOVIE AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
- SNACK
- LISTENING TO MUSIC IN THE ROCKING CHAIR

o Tasks/Activities the student did <u>not</u> enjoy or work well on.

- QUIET TIME AT HER DESK
- MATCHING SHAPES BY COLOR
- LISTENING TO OTHER STUDENTS TALK DURING CIRCLE TIME

•NEGATIVE EXAMPLE• DAILY LOG

Student Name MARY Day of Week/Date MON., 11·5·88
Log Entry By CAROL

1. Overall, what kind of day did the student have?

1	2	3	(4)	5	(circle one number only)
Very Good Day	Okay	Not Sure	Not Okay	Very Bad Day	

2. How well did the student do on tasks while in school today?

1	2	3	(4)	5	(circle one number only)
Very Good Day	Okay	Not Sure	Not Okay	Very Bad Day	

3. How well did the student do on tasks in the community today?

1	(2)	3	4	5	(circle one number only)
Very Good Day	Okay	Not Sure	Not Okay	Very Bad Day	

o Comment briefly on the day's events and the student's behavior; note any incidents which occurred that seem important to you.

MARY DID NOT SEEM TO BE LISTENING OR PAYING ATTENTION TO DIRECTIONS TODAY.

o Tasks/Activities the student enjoyed or worked well on.

LUNCH

o Tasks/Activities the student did not enjoy or work well on.

- COOPERATING DURING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES.

INCIDENT RECORD COMPLETED BY CAROL

STUDENT MARY ACTIVITY TAKING PLACE SITTING AT DESK

WHERE IN CLASSROOM DATE/DAY OF WEEK WED., 11/12/88 TIME 11:30

STAFF PRESENT WHEN INCIDENT OCCURRED CAROL AND SUE

STUDENTS PRESENT WHEN INCIDENT OCCURRED NO OTHERS

•POSITIVE EXAMPLE•

1. Describe what happened just before behavior occurred:

MARY AND I WERE PLAYING "SIMON" AT THE ROUND TABLE. SHE GOT UP AND WENT TO HER DESK. THEN SHE GOT UP FROM HER DESK AND WALKED OVER TO THE CLASSROOM DOOR AND ATTEMPTED TO OPEN IT WHILE LEANING AGAINST THE WALL. I REACHED OUT MY ARM TOWARDS MARY AND SAID, "COME ON, LET'S TRY AGAIN."

2. Describe what the student did and what happened through the incident:

MARY DROPPED TO THE FLOOR AND BEGAN SCREAMING WHILE SHE PULLED HER ARMS IN CLOSE TO HER BODY. I HELD ONTO BOTH OF MARY'S ARMS AND TRIED TO LIFT HER TO HER FEET, BUT SHE ROLLED BACK ONTO THE FLOOR SCREAMING. BECAUSE OF MY CONDITION, I ASKED SUE TO HELP ME WITH MARY. SUE HELD ONTO BOTH OF MARY'S ARMS AND LIFTED HER TO HER FEET, AND THEN PLACED HER IN THE CHAIR AT HER DESK.

3. Describe what happened to the student immediately after the incident: (include any "consequences")

I SAID, "WHEN YOU ACT LIKE THAT YOU CAN SIT AT YOUR DESK." I PUSHED HER CHAIR CLOSE TO THE DESK, AND LEFT HER ALONE UNTIL LUNCH. MARY PUSHED HER DESK FORWARD A FEW TIMES AND BIT ON THE DESK.

4. Why do you think the incident occurred?

MARY DID NOT WANT TO WORK. I THINK SHE WAS REALLY HUNGRY. SHE COMMUNICATED THAT BY GOING TO SIT AT HER DESK BECAUSE THE STUDENTS ALL GO TO THEIR DESKS BEFORE WE LINE UP FOR LUNCH. THEN SHE WENT TO THE DOOR - ANOTHER WAY TO SAY "I'M HUNGRY." EITHER SHE HADN'T EATEN BREAKFAST AT ALL OR HADN'T EATEN ENOUGH TO LAST HER UNTIL LUNCH.

5. How do you think the behavior could have been prevented or handled differently?

I THINK WE SHOULD TALK TO MARY'S MOTHER ABOUT HAVING HER FIX AND EAT A SMALL BREAKFAST (eg. CEREAL & MILK) FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. WE ALSO NEED TO DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM THROUGH MANUAL SIGNS OR PICTOGRAMS SO MARY CAN COMMUNICATE WANTS, AND INDICATE NEEDS. I SHOULD HAVE KEPT TRYING TO INTERACT WITH HER INSTEAD OF JUST LEAVING HER AT HER DESK.

INCIDENT RECORD

COMPLETED BY CAROL

STUDENT MARY ACTIVITY TAKING PLACE SITTING AT DESK

WHERE IN CLASSROOM DATE/DAY OF WEEK WED., 11/12/88 TIME 11:30

STAFF PRESENT WHEN INCIDENT OCCURRED CAROL AND SUE

STUDENTS PRESENT WHEN INCIDENT OCCURRED NO OTHERS

"NEGATIVE EXAMPLE"

1. Describe what happened just before behavior occurred:

MARY WALKED FROM HER DESK TO THE CLASSROOM DOOR.

2. Describe what the student did and what happened through the incident:

MARY REFUSED TO STAND UP AND RETURN TO HER DESK. SHE JUST LAID ON THE FLOOR AND SCREAMED.

3. Describe what happened to the student immediately after the incident: (include any "consequences")

SHE SAT AT HER DESK.

4. Why do you think the incident occurred?

SHE WANTED TO LEAVE THE ROOM.

5. How do you think the behavior could have been prevented or handled differently?

FACE HER DESK IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION SO SHE CAN'T SEE THE DOOR.